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Inferencing

by Kevin Stuckey, M.Ed., CCC-SLP

What is Inferencing?

To *infer* is to look at clues from text or pictures and, based on a person's background knowledge, figure out what is happening (or has happened) through what may be implied, but not directly stated (i.e., reading between the lines). Logic is the ability to think through problems and use our comprehension strategies to solve them. These skills (inferencing, comprehension, and logic) are important for early learning and literacy development.

We make inferences based on current or past events (prior knowledge), whereas predictions are assumptions about future events. However, it is important to remember that making inferences from text or pictures is not the same as making predictions.

Inferencing Practice

When teaching children to make inferences, it is important to begin at the child's ability level to increase success. For younger children, it is helpful to begin with pictures only. Once the child achieves this basic inferencing task, introduce pictures along with text. Finally, have the child practice inferencing with text only. This sequence of learning provides a gradual increase in difficulty and builds upon the skills of making inferences based on clues in different contexts.



- **Pictures Only** – The child will look at the details, actions, or events in the picture and use prior knowledge or experiences to make an inference about the picture.



- **Pictures & Text** – The child will listen to or read text while viewing a picture and make an inference based on visual and/or auditory details.



- **Text Only** – The child will listen to or read the text and make an inference about what he/she read or heard based on prior knowledge and experiences.



Language Skill Areas

Inferencing includes many different language components. By understanding the correlation between the following grammatical elements and inferencing, children can begin expanding their ability to use inferencing throughout their everyday life.



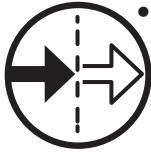
- Identify items with particular **Attributes** – Particular characteristics and features of objects are important for vocabulary development. Attributes include parts, function, description, composition, location and category.

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- **Determine Cause and Effect** – Certain statements tell what made something happen (cause) and what happened as a result (effect). To aid in comprehension, emphasize key cause/effect words such as *so*, *since*, *as a result*, *due to*, and *because*.



- **Compare and Contrast** – This involves identifying similarities and differences between items. Teach children to use Venn diagrams and other simple graphic organizers and visuals to compare, contrast, and identify similarities and differences in a systematic way.



- Use time order words for **Sequencing** – Putting events in a logical order helps children describe events when speaking and writing. To aid comprehension, emphasize key transition words such as *first*, *then*, *next*, *last*, *before* and *after*.



Inferences are what we figure out based on prior knowledge or experiences. Helping students understand when information is implied, or not directly stated, will improve their skill in drawing conclusions and making inferences. Students will need these skills for all sorts of school assignments, including reading, science, and social studies. Inferential thinking is a complex skill that develops over time with experience.

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Resources:

“Making Inferences for Speech Therapy” by Speech and Language Kids (2015) Retrieved 12-8-16 from <https://www.speechandlanguagekids.com/making-inferences-for-speech-therapy/>

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